

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABUJA 002036

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/W BOOTH, AF/RA BITTRICK

E.O. 12958: DECL: 1.6X6

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [CM](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: ARMY MINISTER ON BAKASSI PENINSULA

REF: A. DIA IIR 7 800 0243 01

[B](#). YAOUNDE 2643

[C](#). YAOUNDE 2449

[D](#). STATE 137098

[E](#). ABUJA 1889

(U) Classified by Ambassador Howard F. Jeter; Reasons 1.6X6.

[1](#). (C) After a meeting on security assistance at the Ministry of Defense (septel), Ambassador had a private aside with the Minister of State for Defense (Army), Lawal Batagarawa, on the situation in the Bakassi Peninsula. Batagarawa stated that other than changing the military command structure in the area (Ref A), which he noted Nigeria was trying to do without an appearance of aggression, Nigeria had no plans to take military action against Cameroon. He explained that Nigeria had no hostile intent, and no plans to take action unless forced to respond to Cameroonian actions.

[2](#). (C) The Ambassador asked about recent press reports of exchanges of fire between Nigerian and Cameroonian forces (Ref B). Batagarawa explained that occasionally Nigerian fishermen inadvertently cross the nominal border, which can cause tensions to rise. However, he claimed he had not heard of any exchange of gunfire.

[3](#). (C) The Ambassador noted that the Embassy in Cameroon had briefed the GOC on OFR, and had provided the coordinates for training, so as to avoid misunderstandings (Ref C). The Minister thanked the Ambassador, and expressed his approval of this action.

[4](#). (C) COMMENT: We don't believe that Batagarawa was being entirely forthcoming. Despite what could become a very serious situation in the Bakassi Peninsula, the GON has downplayed the tensions there. Other than some references in the press to the Bakassi Peninsula, we have heard almost nothing from our GON interlocutors. It is possible that the Nigerian military is using the disagreement over the Bakassi Peninsula as a ruse to argue for additional resources. However, MG Ogomudia's remarks and body language during the recent OFR 3rd Group Battalion Commander's briefing (Ref E) lead us to believe that the level of concern within the GON may indeed be very high.
Jeter